

Having described the invention, the following is claimed:

1. A container for holding items to be microbially deactivated in a reprocessor, comprised of:

a generally cup-shaped tray having a bottom wall and a continuous side wall extending to one side from the periphery of said bottom wall, said side wall having a free edge, said bottom wall and said side wall defining a cavity for receiving instruments and items to be microbially deactivated;

a rigid first seal element formed along said free edge of said side wall; and

a lid attachable to said tray, said lid having a rigid second seal element thereon, said second seal element being dimensioned to matingly engage said first seal element on said tray, wherein a convoluted path is defined between said first seal element and said second seal element.

2. A container as defined in claim 1, wherein said first seal element is an integral part of said tray, and said second seal element is an integral part of said lid.

3. A container as defined in claim 1, wherein said path defined between said first seal element and said second seal element is generally serpentine in shape.

4. A container as defined in claim 3, wherein said first and second seal elements include interlocking rail-like projections.

5. A container as defined in claim 4, wherein said first and said second seal elements are comprised of two spaced-apart rail-like projections.

6. A container as defined in claim 5, wherein one of said two spaced-apart rail-like projections on said lid is disposed between and spaced apart from said two rail-like projections on said tray when said lid is attached to said tray.

7. A container as defined in claim 5, wherein said two rail-like projections on said tray abut said lid when said lid is attached to said tray.

8. A container as defined in claim 7, wherein said rail-like projections on said lid do not engage said tray.

9. A container as defined in claim 5, wherein a serpentine path is defined between said rail-like projections on said lid and said rail-like projections on said tray.

10. A container for holding items to be microbially deactivated in a reprocessor having:

a tray for holding said items to be deactivated,

a lid operable to cover said tray, said lid and tray defining a cavity to hold said items to be deactivated,

interacting seal means on said tray and said lid forming a seal between said tray and said lid, said seal means defining a convoluted path between said cavity and the exterior of said container.

11. A container as defined in claim 10, wherein said tray has a rigid, first seal element formed therealong and said lid has a rigid, second seal element formed therealong that matingly engages said first seal element on said tray.

12. A container as defined in claim 11, wherein said first seal element is an integral part of said tray and said second seal element is an integral part of said lid.

13. A container as defined in claim 12, wherein said first and second seal elements include interlocking rail-like projections.

14. A container as defined in claim 13, wherein said first and second seal elements each include two, spaced-apart rail elements.

15. A container as defined in claim 14, wherein said interlocking rail elements define a serpentine path between said cavity and said exterior of said container.

16. A container as defined in claim 15, wherein a U-shaped channel is defined between said rail-like elements on said tray and said lid.

17. A container as defined in claim 16, further comprising a fluid passage communicating with said U-shaped channel to direct a microbial deactivation fluid into said U-shaped channel.

18. A container as defined in claim 17, wherein said tray has a bottom wall and a continuous side wall extending from the periphery of said bottom wall, said side wall having an upper free edge having said rail-like projections formed thereon.

19. In a reprocessor for microbially deactivating items, said reprocessor having a circulation system for circulating an a microbial deactivation fluid through a deactivation chamber that forms part of said circulation system, a container for insertion into said deactivation chamber for holding items to be microbially deactivated, said container including a tray and a lid, said tray and lid having interlocking, integrally formed, rigid seal elements formed thereon to form a seal between said tray and lid.

20. A reprocessor as defined in claim 19, wherein said seal elements are comprised of interlocking, rail-like elements.

21. A reprocessor as defined in claim 20, wherein said tray includes a continuous side wall extending from a base, said side wall having a free end, said rail-like elements extending along said free end of said side wall.

22. A reprocessor as defined in claim 19, wherein said circulation system is essentially closed-loop and said microbial deactivation fluid is circulated through said closed loop.